

**CLAIMS**

What is claimed is:

1. In a collaboration environment, a mechanism for managing information,  
comprising:
  - an application programming interface (“API”) configured to manage and define a hierarchy among a plurality of components;
  - an API configured to define an association between a first component and a second component of the plurality of components;
  - an API configured to manage user access to components through a set of definable permissions;
  - a containment policy configured to determine a permissible content for each component of the plurality of components; and
  - an addressing scheme configured to identify and access each component of the plurality of components.
2. The mechanism of claim 1, further comprising a workflow state interface configured to define a legal workflow state of a component of the plurality of components.
3. The mechanism of claim 2, wherein the workflow state interface is further configured to define an assignment of a workflow having the component of the plurality of components.
4. The mechanism of claim 1, wherein each component of the plurality of components is configured in a hierarchical relationship.

1           5.       The mechanism of claim 4, wherein at least one component of the plurality of  
2 components comprises a leaf level component.

1           6.       The mechanism of claim 4, wherein at least one component of the plurality of  
2 components is a parent component and a child component.

1           7.       The mechanism of claim 4, wherein a component of the plurality of components  
2 comprises a root component.

1           8.       A method for managing information within a collaborative environment,  
2 comprising:  
3               defining a hierarchy for a plurality of components;  
4               defining an association between at least two components of the plurality of  
5 components;  
6               determining a permissible content for each component of the plurality of  
7 components; and  
8               identifying an addressable location for each component of the plurality of  
9 components.

1           9.       The method of claim 8, further comprising defining a legal workflow state of a  
2 component of the plurality of components.

1           10.      The method of claim 9, further comprising defining an assignment of a workflow  
2 having the component of the plurality of components.

1           11.      The method of claim 8, wherein at least one component of the plurality of  
2 components comprises a leaf level component within the hierarchy.

1           12.     The method of claim 8, wherein at least one component of the plurality of  
2 components is a parent component and a child component within the hierarchy.

1           13.     The mechanism of claim 1, wherein a component of the plurality of components  
2 comprises a root component within the hierarchy.

1           14.     In a collaboration environment, a mechanism for accessing information in an  
2 application model, comprising:

3                 a parser for interpreting formulas;

4                 a variant type-system for manipulating simple and structured data types;

5                 a set of operators and general-purpose functions;

6                 a set of lookup functions that expose the underlying components and their values;

7                 and

8                 a calculation engine for evaluating the parsed formulas.

1           15.     The mechanism of claim 14, wherein each lookup function that returns multiple  
2 values provides an expression-based argument for filtering the values returned.

1           16.     The mechanism of claim 14, wherein each lookup function provides arguments  
2 for specifying the fields that are returned.

1           17.     The mechanism of claim 16, wherein a wild-card may be specified to return all  
2 fields supported by a component.

1           18.     The mechanism of claim 16, wherein a field specification argument may be  
2 expressed in terms of a formula that is evaluated in the context of the component that is returned.

1           19.     The mechanism of claim 14, wherein a lookup function provides a path  
2 specification for addressing a component location within a hierarchy.

1           20.     The mechanism of claim 19, wherein a path specification may contain a wild card  
2 to allow recursive lookup within descendant components in the hierarchy.

1           21.     The mechanism of claim 14, wherein a set of functions are provided to return  
2 metadata about the fields available for a component.

1           22.     The mechanism of claim 14, wherein a user interface is provided to test and  
2 develop formulas interactively.

1           23.     A system for managing information within a collaborative environment,  
2 comprising:  
3                 a means for defining a hierarchy for a plurality of components;  
4                 a means for defining an association between at least two components of the  
5 plurality of components;  
6                 a means for determining a permissible content for each component of the plurality  
7 of components; and  
8                 a means for identifying an addressable location for each component of the  
9 plurality of components.

1           24.     The system of claim 23, further comprising a means for defining a legal workflow  
2 state of a component of the plurality of components.

1           25.     The system of claim 24, further comprising a means for defining an assignment of  
2 a workflow having the component of the plurality of components.

1           26.     The method of claim 23, wherein at least one component of the plurality of  
2     components comprises a leaf level component within the hierarchy.

1           27.     The method of claim 23, wherein at least one component of the plurality of  
2     components is a parent component and a child component within the hierarchy.